

The Dancer at the Tabarin

By Mary Roberts Rinehart

Illustrated by T. A. Johnstone.

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It was New Year's Eve at the Bal Tabarin in Vienna. In the center of the long room the girl from Budapest was dancing. She was a tall girl, lithe and supple, and she danced to a clamor of little bells—bells around her waist, bells concealed that tinkled as she swayed, and protested shrilly when she leaped. Her sensuous dancing pleased the crowd; she ceased, smiling, with a flash of dark eyes, and white teeth, a tipsy officer in uniform presented her with a glass of champagne.

The wild Hungarian music rioted. The musicians, in red coats, with swarthy faces, played furiously. With the near approach of midnight, a frenzy seized the crowd. The merriment of the carnival was giving place to something less innocent. A man in a loge drank from a woman's slipper.

Behind the bar, at the top of the steps leading from the boxes to the main floor, an English barmaid was sharpening a lead pencil.

A thin young American girl in a dancing dress stood beside her, leaning both elbows on the bar and surveying the scene with frank curiosity.

"Look at the diamond collar on that woman over there with the bandeau," she said. "Seems to me diamond collars are taking the place of necklaces this winter."

"I'm glad you spoke of that, Tilly," the barmaid yawned and stuck her pencil in her hair. "I'll have some of my stuff made over."

Tilly's eyes had gone back again to the woman with the bandeau.

"I wonder," she reflected, "how I'd look with a black velvet collar like that and a paste buckle on it. I'm so infernally thin!"

Tilly said "infernally." There is strong reason to believe that she would have said "damnable" had it occurred to her. The world had not been kind to Tilly in her nineteen years, and although she was still sound and fine, there were scratches on her social veneer.

Stranded in Europe by the failure of a roving company, in which she had belonged to the chorus, Tilly had refused with loathing the means many of the girls had chosen to get back, and had drifted into the cabarets as the best of a bad job.

For three months now she had been a part of the night life of the city, a dancer at the Tabarin, a familiar figure to rounders, an enigma to the other girls of the cabaret. For Tilly showed a curious willingness to live in her forty kronen a week salary, a hitherto unknown tendency to mind her own business, and an aloofness that was helped by her ignorance of the language.

To-night, on this Silverstereabend, Tilly's eyes, as she stared over the revellers, were somewhat clouded. For her contract at the Tabarin expired that night, and she had every reason to believe that it would not be renewed.

Tilly's innocence was not ignorance. She knew why she was to be dismissed. Her graceful dancing, totally lacking in fire or sensuality, made no appeal to the satiated habits of the Bal Tabarin; her aloofness irritated them. A man one night had held Tilly tight and tried to kiss her, whereat Tilly had bitten his hand until it bled.

Weininger, the proprietor, had stormed in German, and Tilly gathered something of his meaning, and desperately alone, had done her best. She had shortened her shabby skirts, and, even after a battle royal, consented to dance in her bare feet. The result was curious, incongruous—Tilly, dressed like a bacchante, danced her virginal little dance with shamed, downcast eyes, a travesty of bacchante, a child repeating passion by rote.

And now Tilly was at her last ditch. Before long, at dawn probably, Weininger would dismiss her—not pay her off, for Tilly had drawn her salary ahead, being given to the aforesaid riotous living, and having at Christmas, the week before, presented to the children of the porter at her pension, the only Christmas they had received. The barmaid was large and very blonde. To-night, with nothing but champagne on sale, she was not busy, having only the waiter's checks to look after. She pinned a pink rose in her bosom, and looked at Tilly with not unfriendly eyes.

"Have you seen Weininger?" she asked. "He was looking for you."

"I'm right here when he wants me," Tilly's tone was defiant. "Take it from me," the barmaid said, "you do what he wants. You're a long ways from home, kid. You can dance all right. But you've got to put some slap into it to-night if you want to hold your job. You dance like a Sunday school!"

She pushed Tilly toward the steps leading up, with her thin shoulder.

"Tell Weininger, for me, to go to the devil!" she said, and advanced delicately on her bare toes to the top of the half dozen stairs leading down to the floor. And, lingering there, her indifferent eyes fell on the loge across and met those of one of the men. He was watching her, and now he smiled. Tilly smiled back at him with a flash of amusement in her Irish eyes.

"What a pretty little dancer!" said the woman in the box. "She looks Irish, doesn't she?"

"American, I think; I'll tell you in a moment."

The young man who had smiled at Tilly bent over and selected some flowers from the mix on the table.

First he held up a red rose, smiling over it at her. Then he added to it a white carnation and held both up.

Finally, after much searching, he found a blue violet, and with a little air of triumph, extended the red, white and blue cluster. Tilly smiled again, showing her small teeth, and nodded vigorously.

"She looks like Botticelli's Spring!" said the woman in the box. "How exquisitely proportioned she is, and look at her feet! Did you ever see such beautiful feet?"

The younger man said nothing, but he bent forward, watching Tilly.

"She looks quite—nice, too," the woman again. "What a horrible place for her to be!"

The older man laughed and signalled the waiter for more champagne. "These cabaret girls are all alike—had to get through the war, and now they're like that—little devils with the eyes of saints."

And when she finished, without a glance at the man in the box, she gathered her rouge and her broken mirror from under the bar, and disdaining Weininger's fury, she shook the dust of the Bal Tabarin from her feet.

Tilly slept late the next morning. She crawled out into her cold room and put a handful of coal in the tile stove, lighting it with kindlings the size of matches and a bit of paper. Then she went back to bed until the fire should make an impression on the



HE HAD TAKEN PERHAPS A DOZEN STEPS WHEN A SLIM FIGURE STEPPED OUT FROM THE SHADOW OF THE BUILDING AND PUT A TIMID HAND ON HIS ARM

temperature of the cold room, and sitting up, with her ulster around her shoulders, she examined her feet. They were covered with scratches from the rose thorns of the night before, and one toe had been badly cut by glass. Not only that, but a streak of red ran from the toe up to the arch of Tilly's foot. Tilly looked at it in dismay.

The flowers and her bad foot, and not having had her coffee yet, which is enough to make the strongest soul pallid, got rather on her nerves. She put the egg inside the stove to cook, and then she sat down, with her ulster over her nightgown, and looked the said pallid soul in the face. She had been a fool, and she knew it. If she had pleased Weininger last night, he would have looked after her until her foot got better.

Tilly crowded a shoe over her aching foot, put on her ulster, gathered up her shabby little muff, and limped out. She had not a krona to her name, and she was a vague but sufficient number of miles—somewhere in the thousands—from home.

She went to the Prater that afternoon, and sat on a bench watching the carriages go by.

At dusk an officer in uniform, sauntering by, stopped and looked at her. Then he said something in German; Tilly was glad she did not understand.

She looked past him frigidly, and he reached the bank of the Prater lake. This was one, the other being unthinkable. She said over and over, mechanically, "I'll die first." She even heard herself saying it.

And so, limping and shivering, she reached the bank of the Prater lake. She would not look at the water. She put her muff on the ground, and tried with her stiff fingers to take out her hatpins. She was past thinking; certainly there was no reason for saving the hat. And then, suddenly, her eyes fell on the lake, and she broke into choking, hysterical laughter.

This way was closed. The lake was frozen, solid.

Having seen his sister and her husband off for the opera, Sullivan had his evening free. He went to a theatre and found his meagre knowledge of German, complicated by the atrocious Wiener dialect, inadequate. Had he been quite frank with himself, he would have acknowledged that he was only passing the time until the Bal Tabarin opened after the opera.

Sullivan had thought of frequent intervals during the day, of Tilly Reilly. He had thought mostly of her eyes, eyes that did not belong to the Bal Tabarin, eyes that smiled frankly into his, eyes that had dropped demurely as she danced.

Sullivan went to the Bal Tabarin very early. Instead of a loge, he took a table near the center of the room, and sat back, smoking a cigarette and watching the place fill up.

He watched with more eagerness than he would have cared to admit for Tilly. With the informality of the cabaret, the performers lounged around the doorways or mixed with the crowd.

The Apache dancers did their turn, with much pulling and twisting, male flying of skirts and revealing of hideous lingerie and thick cotton stockings. A colored boy, fresh from Georgia, sang ragtime to the mad enthusiasm of the crowd, but Tilly did not appear.

prador to bring it. After waiting some little while and the book not appearing she sent again. She sent a third request, which met with equal indifference.

Irritated, she went to the inner rooms to get it herself. She met the Chinaman going into one of the vaults with a tray of coins in paper wrappings. When to her fourth request he merely affected not to hear she lost her temper and seizing him by the arm gave him a good shaking. The combination of this and his astonishment tipped the tray and several rolls of coins dropped to the cement floor.

The paper on one roll burst. Out rolled several 50 sen pieces and a lot of one sen coppers, which are of the same size as the silver 50 sen pieces. Realizing the fraud in an instant the girl rushed to the cashier's office, while the proprietor fled the building.

He was captured an hour later in the native section of the city and confessed that for months from time to time he had been opening rolls of 50 sen pieces stored as cash reserve in the vaults and substituting the one sen pieces.

At the ends of each roll he placed one of two of the original silver pieces, and when the rolls were superficially checked up from time to time by fraud passed undetected. He had managed to make away with some 8,000 yen, all of which had gone for gambling.

The proprietor was sent to Negishi prison, while the stenographer was thanked by the manager, received a raise in salary and was invited to his home to meet his wife. She became interested in the girl and would have made her a social partner; but the girl, wise in spite of her being a "griffin," accepted informal invitations and firmly refused those formal affairs at the home on the Bluff.

It is a long way to bring stenographers out from home to the Orient on contracts, with the result that the American stenographers who have had experience in the far east always are in demand. The fact that good stenographers are few and far between led to a feud between the managers of two American firms in Tokio that now is history.

"FAIR INEZ." Mrs. Inez Mithouland Bolessevain is back in New York, as enthusiastic a suffragist as ever. Four days after landing she was guest of honor at a reception at the headquarters of the W. P. U. On being asked whether Mr. Bolessevain was a suffragist, she answered, "Why, all his relatives are fighting for votes over in Holland, and the Dutch women are coming to get them mighty soon, too." Woman's Journal.

Discovered Chinaman's System. One day in her work she found it necessary to have one of the account books from the vaults in order to copy some entries. She sent one of the Japanese clerks to ask the aged com-

Sullivan ordered tobacco and other pint of white wine. The atmosphere was reeking; the incessant uproar of the orchestra got on his nerves. When it became clear that the program had reached its end, and was about to repeat, Sullivan got up and sauntered to the bar. He had seen Tilly talking to the barmaid the night before.

But the barmaid was a different one, a black-haired French girl. She said with a shrug of her shoulders, that the Fraulein was krank, and was not there tonight. She knew nothing of Tilly, and made poor work of understanding him. In a sort of rage of disappointment, he got his hat and overcoat, and left the building.

He refused a cab. A fine white snow was falling in the narrow streets. At the corner, a woman was standing, head bent to the storm, looking, in the wind, like some gray night bird, waiting and ominous. With a shudder of disgust, Sullivan buttoned up his coat and turned to start on.

He had taken perhaps a dozen steps when a slim figure stepped out from the shadow of the building, and put a timid hand on his arm.

The light from a street lamp, at that moment, by some caprice of the wind, cleared of snow, fell on the girl's face. It was Tilly, Tilly, quivering, as white as chalk.

Sullivan faced her, almost as white as she. When she saw him, or perhaps before she saw him, the horror of what she was doing came over the girl like a cloud.

"Mother of God!" she gasped, and turning, ran, with all the speed of her cold limbs and aching feet, down the street, with Sullivan after her.

He overtook her in a dozen strides, caught her by the shoulder and wheeled her about to face him. Even in that instant, his anger had turned to pity.

"I'm not going to hurt you, child," he said. "I am only—what are you doing out here in the storm?"

Tilly swayed somewhat and closed her eyes. Desperate as she was, she felt the shaken depths in the man's voice.

"I am going to take you home," Tilly stirred at that. "The word brought bitterness with it. She jerked her arm free. "You let me go!" she cried, shrilly. "If I want to go to the devil, it's my business, isn't it? I don't want pity. I only want to be let alone."

Sullivan looked down at her. His eyes were still kind, but something had faded out of them; perhaps it was faith that had gone.

"I think," he said slowly, "that last night I thought—I would have sworn that you—"

And at that, without warning, Tilly burst into loud, hysterical sobbing. "I never did it in my life before!" she choked. "Never! Never!"

The snow was falling heavily now. Out of the white wall an occasional cab emerged to lose itself a moment later. Laughter and music, and the rhythm of dancing feet, came through doors that opened and shut. In the night city, no one is curious: each is intent on his own affairs. And so, undisturbed, Sullivan and Tilly, and her tortured young soul on his shoulder.

After a time she grew quieter. He hardly knew what to do. He could take her to his home, but that was of course—but not at that hour of the night. He must get her under shelter somewhere. Asked where she lived, she said "Nowhere," and told him a little story between dry sobs.

He took her to a small hotel which the cabman, with a leer, suggested. The character of the place troubled Sullivan no whit. He wanted to see the girl comfortable and fed, and more than all, mentally normal again. There was no lift. He and a porter assisted her up the stairs, and laid her on a bed in a tawdry little room. Although it was after two in the morning, the porter brought some hot soup

and Sullivan, drawing up a chair, fed her by spoonfuls.

Tilly lay back with closed eyes and open, childish mouth. When the soup was done, she looked at Sullivan gratefully.

"I didn't know there were men like you in the world," she held out her hand to him, and he took it between both of his.

"I thought all men were rotters," she said, sighing happily. "You're the best man I have ever known." Sullivan flushed uncomfortably.

"I guess the average is higher than you think," he said. "Sure you are warm enough?"

"Fine."

"Foot feel better?"

"It aches—some," she admitted. "Don't you think you'd better take off your shoe and look at it?"

"I will," she hesitated. "If you will turn your back."

Sullivan gravely went to the window and stood, his back to her, while she took off her shoe with a sigh of relief, and then her stocking. The foot was swollen. "It looks pretty bad. Would you—perhaps you'd better look and see if it is poisoned?"

Sullivan came over and looked down judiciously. Then he stooped and poked lightly at the swelling with awkward fingers. "It looks bad enough, poor little foot!" he said gently. "We'll have a doctor to look at it in the morning."

"I can't lose it," wistfully. "If I can't dance again. I—" Her chin quivered.

Sullivan looked at her.

"What if you can't dance again?" Tilly met his eyes.

"I'll starve to death," she said simply.

She went to sleep almost immediately after that, one arm thrown up over her head, the other across her childish breast. Sullivan towered the light, creaking around on his toes to avoid waking her. Then he drew a chair close beside the bed, and sat looking at her, at her eyelids, blue-veined and black-lashed, at the purity of her mouth, the sweetness and character of her chin, at the swollen foot, lying on a pillow, with the fine scratches on the sole. And, with the intuition that comes to a man so surely because so seldom, Sullivan knew that the scratches were all of evil that Tilly had carried away from the Bal Tabarin.

Heavy footsteps outside on the corridor threatened to rouse the girl from her sleep. He rose and stood looking down at her. He had an impulse to stoop and kiss her on the forehead, but he did not. Instead, he carried his chair into the hall and sat down, sentinal fashion, just outside the door.

The light from a gas lamp wavered in the draft, faintly illuminating the stone stairs, with their twisted iron baluster. Laughter and music came up the staircase well, but he heard neither. His thoughts had gone ahead to a future in which this girl, this wait he had gathered from the streets, should have her part: to take her back to the homeland, to care for her and cherish her, to see her growing into that purity of womanhood that was her birthright, and then, perhaps, some day to go to her and ask for her love.

Tilly roused from sleep at dawn, and lay a moment, remembering. Then with her heart beating fast, she slipped to the door and opened it. Outside, Sullivan was sleeping in his chair, his head dropped forward.

Tilly stood looking down at him with shining eyes. When he slept on, she slipped forward and, dropping on her knees silently, put her lips to the sleeve of Sullivan's New York-made dress coat. Then, flushed and palpitating, she fled back to the room, and stood leaning against the door, trembling, with shining eyes.

"You dear!" she whispered to the door panel. "You dear! I'm dippy about you!"

[THE END.]

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At the height of the revolution in China, she, at the beginning of the year, was in Hankow, an American firm in the trading business in that city had its monthly collections, amounting to thousands of dollars in cash and checks, on hand. The city was practically cut off from outside communication and business was at a standstill. In view of a probable sack of the city the only way to save the firm's money was to get it to a bank in Shanghai.

When it was realized that all the men of the company, members of the Hankow volunteer corps, must stay at the protection of the foreign settlement. Miss Edna Lodge, the firm's stenographer, volunteered to make the trip. When she declared that for her own protection she would try to reach Shanghai anyway the members of the firm gave in and agreed to send her with the money.

With one of the Chinese compradors and a coolie from the office whom they believed they could trust they started her with \$6,000 in currency and about \$14,000 in checks on what at best would be a three or four day trip down the Yangtze-Kiang.

In the company's launch they traveled a day and a half down the river, successfully evading the rebel soldiers who were watching the river. Then something went wrong with the engines, and when he failed to make repairs after an hour or so tinkering the panic-stricken comprador fled. He did not neglect, however, to take a service revolver they had with them, and the stenographer was left with a stupid coolie and a little .22 caliber revolver of her own to protect her.

Braved a Three Days' Journey.

As she said afterwards, she simply bullied the coolie into going on foot with her a few miles to the nearest village, where the village headman agreed to get ponies of the small wiry Chinese breed. On these they headed for Nankin, where she knew they could count on the railroad line being still in operation.

A few hours after starting overland she remembered that under the stress of the moment she had deserted the launch without taking a supply of foreign food. As a result she was forced to make a three-day saddle journey to Nankin, living practically on beans and rice, the only food they could count on getting from the natives.

She did it, however, and in constant fear that "my mien" run into a rowing band of rebels she bullied the coolie into guiding her to Nankin.

Reward With Trip. At that place she found the railroad still open and a few hours later reached the Shanghai office of her firm. For a reward the firm offered to pay the expenses of a six months' vacation to the United States and back. She said she would rather go via Suez and see Europe, and they agreed. Now she is in the Yokohama office of the same firm.

Yokohama is ultra-English in social atmosphere. Out of the comparatively small community of foreigners the guest list to social functions on the Bluff, the beautiful residential section back of the city, is rigidly made up. Stenographers usually are not on the list, but one, a stenographer in one of the big banks, was a member of the list.

Months after she had been transferred from the Manila branch of the concern a burst of tempest led to the discovery of systematic stealing that had been going on in the bank for eight months.

Like the majority of firms in Japan and China, the bank employed compradors, Chinamen who could be trusted in the handling of money. One in particular, an old man, shuffled around with an air of Oriental indifference that grated on the American girl from Manila.

Discovered Chinaman's System. One day in her work she found it necessary to have one of the account books from the vaults in order to copy some entries. She sent one of the Japanese clerks to ask the aged com-

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